

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 are pending in the present application, with claims 8-16 withdrawn in response to a restriction requirement and claims 1, 4 and 5 canceled without prejudice in the previous amendment. With entry of this Amendment, Applicants amend claims 6, 7 and 21 and cancel claim 20 without prejudice. Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claim 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the admitted prior art. Because Applicants have canceled claim 20 without prejudice, the rejection is now moot. Applicants have amended claim 21 -- which depended from claim 20 -- by placing claim 21 in independent form. Claims 6 and 7, which depended from claim 20, have been amended to depend from claim 21. Applicants respectfully request entry of these amendments, given that they are directed to form and present no new issues for the Examiner.

The Examiner rejected claims 17-19 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over admitted prior art in view of Konuma (US 6127279). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The present invention relates generally to the processing surfaces of substrates. After the substrates are etched and rinsed, the present invention employs a hydrophilic process to supply the rinsed substrates with ozone water prior to drying. The ozone water has a concentration ranging from 0.5 to 10 PPM, to thereby form an oxidation film having a thickness of 6 to 10 Å on the surface of the substrates.

The Examiner notes that Konuma discloses ozone water having a concentration of 0.1 to 20 PPM as set forth in Col. 5, lines 20-33. However, it is clear from the cited section that the ozone bath of Konuma is in preparation for etching. Ozone water is applied *before* using the etching solution. In contrast, the present invention employ the above-described hydrophilic process described *after* etching and rinsing and before drying. The present invention has found that the recited hydrophilic process allows the substrates to be dried without watermarks and yet

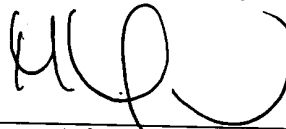
avoids the dissolution of the resist pattern. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the disclosed ozone concentration of Konuma is irrelevant, because it applies to a different step in the overall process. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 17-19 and 21 are not anticipated by or obvious in view of the admitted prior art and Konuma.

The Examiner rejected claims 2, 3, 6 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the admitted prior art in view of Kamikawa et al. (US 6119367). Kamikawa fails to disclose the hydrophilic process recited in claims 17 and 21 from which claims 2 and 3 and claim 6 and 7 depend from, respectively. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2, 3, 6 and 7 are not anticipated by or obvious in view of the cited references.

If view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 17-19 and 21 of the present application are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner feels that it would advance the prosecution of the application, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone the undersigned attorney.

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorize the Assistant Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to **Deposit Account No. 03-1952** referencing docket no. 199372003600.

Respectfully submitted,



Dated: July 31, 2003

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